

Funding Terrorism: The al-Qaeda-affiliated Salafi Army of the Nation in Jerusalem, which operates in the Gaza Strip, recently renewed its Bitcoin fund-raising campaign

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Overview

The Salafi Army of the Nation in Jerusalem, a jihadi organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda operating in the Gaza Strip, recently renewed a campaign to raise funds in Bitcoin (for information about the organization, see the Appendix). According to the organization, **donations will provide organization fighters with weapons and military equipment**. At the bottom of the announcement are the address of a virtual wallet for inserting Bitcoin donations, an email address and a Telegram account (Telegram, May 8, 2020).



The Salafi Army of the Nation in Jerusalem announcement calling for Bitcoin donations to equip its fighters. At the right is a picture of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, and at the left a quotation of one of his declarations (Telegram, May 8, 2020).

- ▶ The notice calling for Bitcoin was issued by **the al-Raya foundation, the Salafi Army's media outlet**. The notice is headlined "Equip a [jihad] fighter" and contains **a quote from al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri** calling on the nation of Islam to support the jihad in "Palestine" in every way possible. The notice goes on to say that the campaign is meant to devote money for the sake of Allah to equip Salafi Army jihad fighters. The address of the virtual wallet for Bitcoin donations is at the bottom of the notice, along with the organization's email and Telegram addresses (Telegram, May 8, 2020).
- ▶ The Salafi Army holds a Bitcoin fund-raising drive annually, launching similar drives in May 2019 and May-June 2018, with the same email and Telegram addresses. The objective of the

drives is explained as raising money **to provide jihad fighters going into battle with military equipment costing \$2,000**. During the 2018 campaign the costs were elaborated: a Kornet missile costs \$9,500, a Sagger missile \$5,000, a Katyusha rocket \$1,000 and a Grad rocket \$2,500.¹

► The Salafi Army campaign is one of the efforts made by the terrorist organizations, including jihad organizations and Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, to raise money using Bitcoin.² It is unclear how effecting the method is, although **the fact that the Salafi Army and other terrorist organizations have repeatedly used it would indicate it is a convenient way to raise money without oversight from the banking system and law enforcement agencies.**

¹ For further information, see the May 19, 2019 bulletin, "Funding Terrorism: campaign of a jihadi organization operating in the Gaza Strip to raise funds in Bitcoin."

² For further information see the February 4, 2019 bulletin, " Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committees called on their supporters to donate money using the virtual currency Bitcoin."

Appendix

The Salafi Army of the Nation in Jerusalem – Overview

- ▶ **The Salafi Army of the Nation in Jerusalem**, affiliated with ISIS, is one of the jihad organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. The organizations are under the strict oversight of Hamas, which views them challenging its control and a source of unmanageable terrorist activity against Israel and/or Egypt.
- ▶ The organization was established in 2005 as The Army of the Nation.³ In 2012 it merged with a Salafi organization called the Salafi Youth Coalition – Palestine, changing its name to the Salafi Army of the Nation in Jerusalem. The organization is affiliated with Al-Qaeda, which is headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri, although it did not swear allegiance to him. It is in favor of the imposition of Islamic religious law (Sharia), jihad against Israel and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate (according to the blog of researcher Ayman Jawad al-Tamimi, February 20, 2019).



Right: Emblem of the organization, which is the flag of jihad, with a sword symbolizing jihad and the *shahada* (the obligatory declaration of every Muslim, "There is no Allah but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet). The text below reads, "The Salafi Army of the Nation in Jerusalem."
Left: Emblem of al-Raya, the Salafi Army's media foundation. It has the minaret of a mosque and a flag with the *shahada* (Telegram, May 5, 2019)

- ▶ In January 2017, the Salafi Army of the Nation in Jerusalem praised the vehicular attack in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Armon Hanatziv, carried out by a terrorist named Fadi Qanbar from Jabal Mukaber, who was affiliated with jihadist Salafism. The attack killed four Israeli soldiers and wounded 15. Several jihadi Salafist networks in the Gaza Strip praised the

³ For further information about beginning of the organization, see the February 11, 2008 bulletin, "A group called 'Army of the Nation, Jerusalem' is yet another global jihad offshoot in the Gaza Strip. Since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, there has been an increase in the propaganda and terrorist activities carried out by radical Islamic groups associated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad."

attack. According to one announcement, the terrorist who carried out the attack belonged to ISIS.⁴

⁴ For further information see January 9, 2017 bulletin, : “Vehicular attack in Armon Hanatziv in Jerusalem.”